



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney
Director of Community Relations
(612) 664-5611
email: jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov**

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, January 8, 2010
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8 sentenced for operating crack cocaine ring in Duluth

Earlier today three defendants appeared in federal court in Duluth to be sentenced for their roles in a crack cocaine distribution ring that operated in the Duluth area between January of 2008 and February of 2009. United States District Court Judge Richard H. Kyle sentenced Earl David Bowser, age 30, of Chicago, Illinois, to 120 months in prison; Alten Eugene Hall, age 22, of Harvey, Illinois, to 60 months in prison; and Raymond Vick Bowser, age 25, of Duluth, Minnesota, to 46 months in prison. Each was charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute in excess of five grams of cocaine base, commonly known as crack cocaine. They were indicted, along with six co-defendants, on February 19, 2009.

In response to today's sentences, Bernard J. Zapor, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said, "We are grateful for the law enforcement partnership that took this organization off the streets. Many agents and officers surrendered time away from their lives to make the community safer so others could enjoy theirs."

The investigation into this case was dubbed Operation Big Deal II by the officers involved and is part of an ongoing effort by local, state, and federal law enforcement to stop drug trafficking in the Duluth area. The original Operation Big Deal resulted in the arrest of two dozen members of a cocaine and crack cocaine ring that operated in and around that city. Those arrested in that earlier case ultimately pleaded guilty to various narcotics charges and were sentenced to federal prison. In the fall of 2008, the leader of that ring, Bernard Vann, was sentenced to 126 months.

As part of Operation Big Deal II, Judge Kyle yesterday sentenced three defendants on one count of conspiracy to distribute in excess of 50 grams of crack cocaine. Antione Maurice Easter, age 34, of Duluth, was sentenced to 120 months in prison; Andre Terrell Harris, age 26, of Chicago, was sentenced to 60 months in prison; and Antonio Derrick Smith, age 36, of Minneapolis, was sentenced to 120 months in prison. In addition, Judge Kyle sentenced one defendant on a single charge of conspiracy to distribute in excess of five grams of crack cocaine. Michael Clark, age 25, of Chicago, was sentenced to 60 months in prison for that crime.

Finally, on January 4, 2009, Judge Kyle sentenced Damien Lavon Spraggins, age 23, of Duluth, to 90 months in prison on one count of conspiracy to distribute in excess of 50 grams of crack cocaine. The ninth defendant in this case, Arkeith C. Mosby, age 20, address unknown, is being held in Illinois in connection with another crime.

This case was the result of the investigative work of the Duluth Police Department; the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and the Lake Superior Drug and Gang Task Force. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian S. Wilton.